National Culture Policy

*164. SHRIMATI SHOBHANA BHARTIA††
SHRIMATI SUPRIYA SULE:

Will the Minister of CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether a Committee was constituted by her Ministry in October last year with the responsibility of making recommendations to the Ministry for framing a National Culture Policy and was asked to study, among other things, the extent and role of Government in various areas of culture and also assess the mandate for various cultural institutions;

(b) if so, by what time the Committee was asked to submit its recommendations;

(c) whether Government has received the report; and

(d) if so, the details of the same?

THE MINISTER OF CULTURE (SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b)The Committee was required to submit its recommendations within six months of its constitutions.

(c) No, Sir.

(d)Does not arise.

SHRIMATI SHOBHANA BHARTIA: Sir, the answer really does not give any insight as to what is happening. But the hon. Minister is, perhaps, only giving me answers in single sentence because nothing has happened. I would like to know what is the position of the Committee. I would also like to know whether it is at all necessary for the Government to have a fixed policy in the matters of art and culture, where flexibility, freedom of expression and liberty are of prime importance. Therefore, Sir, should the Government not keep its role to being just a promoter and facilitator, as opposed to being a regulator, in the field of culture?

SHRI AJAY MAKEN: Sir, the hon. Member has raised a very important issue, and a very valid point also. 1 would like to tell the hon. Member, through you, that this Committee was formed in October, 2006, and this Committee had only one meeting. This Committee was formed to constitute a National Cultural Policy. But, in the first meeting itself, out of 19 members, only eight members came to participate in that meeting. The general consensus in that meeting was that we should not have a National Cultural Policy. Instead, they suggested that we should have a broad framework to improve the efficacy of cultural institutions. So, this is something, which was in general consensus amongst the Committee members also. We have a Central Advisory Board on Culture. The majority of members of the Central Advisory Board on Culture also felt the same way. So, I agree with the hon. Member that six months have lapsed since the Committee was constituted. The Committee's term was for six months. Now, again, the Central Advisory Board on Culture has been re-constituted in October, this year. The Central Advisory Board on Culture will have a fresh look on all these aspects.

SHRIMATI SHOBHANA BHARTIA: Sir. would that mean that when this Committee's term comes to an end, the Government is not thinking of being a regulator?

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††The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shrimati Shobhana Bhartia.

SHRI AJAY MAKEN: Sir, as I said, the general consensus amongst the members of this Committee and the general consensus in the Government also, and, also, one of the key members of this Committee, Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan, in her letter, had written that if we had the Central Advisory Board on Culture, where was the need for this Committee on cultural policies. Secondly, democracies, with rural cultural societies, are no longer talking about uniform cultural policy. The UNESCO also, in its latest reports on cultural diversity, has also pointed out at this point. So the thinking has changed. It was way back in seventies and eighties that the UNESCO used to think that we should have uniform cultural policy for nation. But, now, gradually, in pluralistic democratic societies, multiple cultural societies, binding by one cultural policy, as such, I think, is not feasible, and the majority of the Committee members also feel the same way.

SHRIMATI SHOBHANA BHARTIA: Sir, my second supplementary is this. The funds that are under the disposal of the Culture Ministry are abysmally low to actually maintain and upkeep the monuments that are under the ASI. Besides that, there are many monuments which are outside the purview of the ASI and those are in the States. I want to know from the hon. Minister whether they are proactively thinking of greater private sector participation to enable the private sector to come in and maintain certain monuments, support performing arts; and, if so, whether the States are also being sensitised. I know that some initiatives have been taken at the central level. But, each State has its own policy, so, are you proactively trying to sensitise the States to encourage private sector participation?

SHRI AJAY MAKEN: Sir, again, this is a very important issue. Under the Terms of Reference for the Central Advisory Board on Culture, we have put, as one of the Terms of Reference, these things also. We will go by the suggestions made by the Central Advisory Board on Culture. Already the Government has taken certain initiatives in this regard. The Terms of Reference of the Central Advisory Board on Culture also covers some aspects which you have raised, and we go by what they suggest.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Smt. Supriya Sule. Dr. Karan Singh.

DR. KARAN SINGH: Mr. Chairman, Sir, before I put the question, I must declare that I have an interest, in the sense, that I also happen to be the President of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations.

Sir, it is shocking that the Committee, set up over a year ago, has met only once, and, then, out of 19 members only 8 members attended it. What sort of a farce is this? What sort of committees do we appoint if they are not prepared to come to meetings? That is the first thing I want to say. This is the first observation. This shows that there is no sense of urgency about this matter.

But, Sir, the real point I want to make is this. Shri Chidambaram is trying to make us into an economic superpower. We all want to become political superpowers. We are a cultural superpower. There is no doubt about it. We are one of the few nations in the world that can claim to be a cultural superpower. Our culture, without the use of arms, has spread down through the centuries, down through the corridors of time throughout vast swathes of South and South East Asia. Now, therefore, we must give culture top priority. If this is the sort of attitude that is going to be taken by the members of the committee, I am afraid, Sir, it is not a good omen. May I therefore know from the hon. Minister whether he will, first of all, have wide-ranging consultations? There are organisations, like the ICCR, and there are private cultural organisations. There are literary organisations. Culture involves dance, music, art, architecture, philosophy, language; there is the whole gamut of what makes a human being

civilised. Will they spread their net wider? Will they try and get the best minds in India involved, before they come out with a cultural policy?

SHRI AJAY MAKEN: Sir, in the Committee to formulate the cultural policy as well as the Central Advisory Board on Culture, the Ministry always tries to have a broad-based discussion amongst different institutions, and we finalise the names which we have before us. They are all eminent people. I would like to say that we have Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan as the Vice-Chairperson, and Prof. Yashpal, Prof. Mrinal Miri, Shri Adoor Gopalakrishnan, Shri Shyam Benegal, Shri Amjad Ali Khan, etc. as members of this Committee. All these 14 people, who are members of this Committee,- are eminent people. They ared eminent people in their respective fields. The Government can appoint them, and it can make arrangements for their meetings. But, we, simultaneously, keep on requesting them to attend the meetings, and contribute as much as they can.

DR. (SHRIMATI) KAPILA VATSYAYAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Sir. I think that the issue is far more important than setting up of what is called a central advisory board on culture. Mr. Chairman, Sir, through you, I wish to place on record here that culture as an administrative unit does not reflect, as Dr. Karan Singh has said, the long history of this country in civilisational terms. It is anachronistical today to establish a Department of Culture, which has no connections with the Department of Agriculture, to begin with. If the Department of culture is disassociated from the fields of rural development, education, science and the creativity of rural India in the craft sector, then culture becomes a matter only of showcasing. Therefore, it is important, and I would like to submit to this House that across Party lines we have to think in terms of what constitutes the cultural fabric of this country, at the root levels, in terms of the life of people. I would also like to submit to you, Sir, that the whole fields, which are known as the administrative fields of culture, institutions, were established long ago, and, I happen to be a part of that history. But it is time that we look at it again, unless there is an integrated view, there can be no question of a cultural policy. The hon. Minister rightly mentioned, by quoting my letter, that it was in the 70's, during another regime and another international dialogue, that there was a effort of, what is called, national policies on culture. Even at that time, this Government. ...*(Interruption)*...

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please put your question.

DR. (SHRIMATI) KAPILA VATSYAYAN: Sir, I will come to the question in a minute. Now even more is no scope, for what is called, an administrative official cultural policy. My question, therefore, to the hon. Minister is: What steps has the Government taken to see that what is called the domain of official culture is integrated with these other domains, including information and broadcasting? Thank you.

SHRI AJAY MAKEN: Sir, as I said, the Government has formed the Central Advisory Board on Culture of which the hon. Member is the Vice-Chairperson. Earlier also, in 2004, the Central Advisory Board on Culture was formed. Three meetings took place of that Central Advisory Board on Culture. Now we have made it mandatory that after every three months the meeting of this Board should take place. We hope and expect that this Committee will give some good and meaningful suggestions as the hon. Member said, so that we could do the needful.

DR. (SHRIMATI) NAJMA A. HEPTULLA: Mr. Chairman, Sir, as Kapila Vatsyayanji said that there should be an integrated policy as far as culture is concerned as regards Education, Ministries of Culture, Information and Broadcasting and Science and Technology. Is it not a fact, hon. Minister, that after Independence in 1947, there was a Department of Education,

which included Culture and Science and Technology? Is the Government thinking of creating an integrated system by which these three or four Ministries can work together, and they should not become water-tight compartments within those Ministries?

SHRI AJAY MAKEN: Sir, I think, the hon. Member has made a very good suggestion and the Ministry of Culture would talk to its counterpart in different Ministries. We will formulate a policy as to how culture can be integrated with education, agriculture and various other Departments.

Central grant for saline embankments in Orissa

*165. SHRI B.J. PANDA:††
MS. PRAMILA BOHIDAR:

Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) whether the State Government of Orissa has requested the Centre for grant of Rs. 750 crore flood aid to meet the losses caused by the recent floods;

(b) whether the State Government of Orissa has also approached the Centre for financial assistance for construction of saline embankments on the entire coastline and dredging in the river mouths etc.; and

(c) if so, the details thereof, *inter-alia* indicating the help that has so far been provided to the State for the purpose?

THE MINISTER OF WATER RESOURCES (PROF. SAIF-UD-DIN SOZ): (a) to (c) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) As informed by Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of Orissa has submitted two memoranda, first memorandum seeking additional Central assistance of Rs. 306.70 crore from National Calamity Contingency Fund for relief operation in the areas affected by heavy rains/ floods in July, 2007 and subsequently second memorandum seeking additional Central assistance of Rs. 1093.53 crore for floods of August-September, 2007.

(b) and (c) The State Government of Orissa has submitted a proposal amounting to Rs. 190 crore for financial assistance for construction of saline embankments to National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) under National Cyclone Risk Mitigation Project (NCRMP) for consideration of World Bank assistance.

Besides the above, a proposal submitted by the State Government for dredging of river mouths of river Mahanadi and Devi under Mahanadi Basin Development Programme amounting to Rs. 89.16 crore was examined in Central Water Commission and comments have been conveyed to the State Government.

SHRI B.J. PANDA: Sir, supplementaries are supposed to enable me to ask follow-up questions, but, regrettably, my basic question itself as to how much help has been extended to the State for flood relief and for dredging has not been answered. So, I must repeat the question to the hon. Minister. How much of the requested funding from the State Government has,

††The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri B.J. Panda.